



Task Force Danger

October 25, 2004

# *BRO Progress*

*1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division*

## Soldiers winning over residents of Samarra

SAMARRA, Iraq – Soldiers with B Company, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment walk through the streets, accompanied by two gun trucks. During the mission, time is made to speak with members of a youth soccer team and buy ice cream cones for grateful children.

Company leaders speak with merchants, offering everything from watermelon to hubcaps. Virtually every resident stops and stares at the passing patrol, most of them smiling and waving. After an hour on patrol, the Soldiers turn and head back to their forward operating base.

The situation would be unremarkable, if not for the location. Less than two weeks prior, anti-Iraq forces controlled Samarra and most of the residents stayed inside out of fear.

“We couldn’t have walked through this area a week ago without being shot up with RPGs,” said 1LT Greg Longo, a B 1-14 platoon leader from Calumet, Mich.

But one impressive offensive later, the streets of Samarra have been reclaimed. Daily missions by Task Force 1-14 help maintain security and help win over the residents.

Claims have been paid for damage to homes, and uniforms have been bought for a local youth soccer team.

“We’re winning over those folks that may have been borderline before,” Longo said. “It’s night and day as far as their reception toward us now and before.”

After the main thrust of Operation Baton Rouge ended, Soldiers went scouring for remaining insurgents, and many of the residents misunderstood the U.S. intent.

“When we were going into their houses, they thought we were going to kill everybody,” said SGT Anthony San Luis, a B/ 1-14 team leader from Dededo, Guam.

“We explained that we were just there to get the bad guys. We started passing out candy, playing with the kids. When they realized we’re not there to hurt, but to help, you could see the relief.”

PFC Jim Torres, a squad automatic

weapon gunner from Tacoma, Wash., noted that Iraqi National Guard members are also helping keep the new-found peace. “It looks like they’ve got it under control,” he said admiringly.

Besides bringing safety to the streets, there’s also the matter of rebuilding the dilapidated city. That’s where the civil affairs teams come in.

Local contractors have fully restored electricity and water services to Samarra, are providing supplies to schools and hospitals, and cleaning up streets, mosques and playgrounds. The contractors pro-

vide updates to the civil affairs Soldiers on their progress and also bring up any needs.

Not every disbursement is as dramatic, but all are helpful.

“People come if they have any damages,” Fernitz said. “They tell us about them, show us proof, and tell us what they think the proper amount is. If everything is legitimate, we give them payment right on the spot.”

With projects on tap for schools, hospitals, roads, and mosques, about the only thing not seen in Samarra these days are the insurgents.



# Soldier helps Iraqi children through individual effort



BAYJI, Iraq – When SPC Michael Tingue arrived in Bayji, Iraq with the 1st Infantry Division's Task Force 1-7 in March, he saw the conditions in which children in this war-torn country had to live. More importantly, he saw that he had the opportunity to help.

As a supply specialist, he was already skilled at managing the inventory, storage and distribution of large amounts of supplies, so the project fell into place for him naturally.

"As a Quartermaster, it's my job to support the war fighter. I saw this as a chance to show Iraqis we're here to help, and to possibly take away some of the hate towards Americans," said Tingue of his project.

Tingue started by writing a letter explaining how people could help by sending clothes, school supplies and toys to his hometown newspaper in Oregon, the *Albany Democrat-*

*Herald*. The letter then made its way to *The Oregonian*, another newspaper, and sent along by eager supporters, eventually making it as far as Chicago, Connecticut, and Louisiana.

So far he has received more than 200 boxes of donations for Iraqi children. And though he never thought his singular effort to help would grow to such proportions, Tingue is pretty happy with how his project turned out.

Further donations for Iraqi Children can be made under Operation I Can (Iraqi Children's Assistance Network) from the 1st Infantry Division web page ([www.1id.army.mil](http://www.1id.army.mil)) or by mailing to:

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## Ensuring tight security along the Iraq-Iran border

CHOARTA DISTRICT, Iraq – In the past, smuggling and terrorist activity plagued the mountainous terrain along the north-eastern border of Iraq and Iran. The Iraqi Border Police – now known as the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) – was established in July 2003 to patrol the border and eliminate these illegal operations.

Border teams from Headquarters and Headquarters Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 11th Field Artillery Regiment, head out on six-day border patrol missions from Forward Operating Base Kalsu to provide any needed support to the DBE inside 2nd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division's area of operations.

Task Force 2-11 has three border teams that support DBE units in five districts and 292 miles of the Iraq-Iran border.

In most cases, border teams stay overnight at random border control points (BCPs) within the districts, where they interact with DBE guards and monitor border surveillance.

At the end of their long and tiring patrol missions, border teams travel back to FOB Kalsu to re-arm and refit. Four days later, border teams travel out to the mountains again.

